

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 19, 2018

Agenda Item: Fishing Regulation Change for Red Rocks Lake National Wildlife Refuge (R3)

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background:

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP), The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other partners have worked collaboratively to develop an adaptive management plan to understand factors that drive the status of Arctic Grayling in Red Rock Creek in the Centennial Valley. In 2013, harvest limits of hybridized Yellowstone Cutthroat trout were liberalized and active trapping and removal by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service occurred to suppress the population to determine the effect that the non-native fish were having on Arctic Grayling. After four years of suppression, it became apparent that the non-native cutthroat hybrids were not the primary driver of Arctic Grayling abundance; therefore, in 2017, FWP changed the harvest regulation to 5 fish of any size, and began to evaluate other factors in the valley that may be influencing the conservation status of Arctic Grayling. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approached FWP and requested to change the harvest regulation for non-native Yellowstone Cutthroat trout to catch-and-release and use of artificial lures only.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also requested that the angling season for the adjacent Elk Springs Creek be changed to be closed to angling from May 15 to June 15 to prevent trampling of grayling eggs and be consistent with Red Rock Creek. They requested that the angling season for Widgeon and Culver ponds be changed to be closed to angling from November 30 to April 15 to minimize conflicts with migrating and pre-nesting swans. Finally, they requested that the regulations be changed to allow use of artificial lures only on each of these waterbodies.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

Public comments for this proposal will be requested following Commission endorsement.

Alternatives and Analysis:

The commission could choose to retain the current fishing regulations, adopt Central District standard regulations, or adopt the proposed regulations.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale:

FWP staff make this recommendation to the Commission to satisfy a request of our partners, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Proposed Motion:

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve for public comment the proposed changes to change the daily and possession limits for Red Rock Creek to include no harvest of cutthroat trout and use of artificial lures only, close Elk Springs Creek to angling from May 15 to June 15 and allow use of artificial lures only, and close Widgeon and Culver Ponds from November 30 to April 15 and allow use of artificial lures only.